



# **A Veterinarian's Experience with Iowa's Puppy Mill Dogs**

As presented to the  
Care of Animals in Commercial Enterprises Study Committee  
September 29, 2009



# Condition of Breeding Stock

Many rescue groups, shelters, and humane organizations utilize my services.

As a result of this, I have seen a significant number of commercial breeding dogs.

The issue to be addressed is the health and care of the breeding stock that live their entire lives in poor, inhumane conditions.

The puppies go on to new homes, new lives, and new environmental conditions. Their parents are left behind to produce more litters.

# Condition of Puppies or Parents?

- The breeding dogs are never examined by a veterinarian.
- The result of that is dangerous and inhumane.
- Veterinary care is considered an unnecessary business expense.
- When diseases are being discovered, it is usually because the puppies are afflicted with SEVERE conditions, and being returned by the purchaser.
- If breeding stock has undiagnosed conditions, even if it is mild , it can lead to
  - An INCREASED PERCENTAGE of puppies affected within the litter AND
  - An increase in SEVERITY of the condition in the affected puppy.



# Health Issues of Commercial Stock

- **Severe Matting** of coat leading to skin infections, ear and eye infections, difficulty with mobility, difficulty urinating and defecating.
- **Severe Dental Disease**. Teeth are rotting out of head. High risk of infections elsewhere in body i.e. liver, kidney, bladder.
- **Severe flea infestation** leading to skin infections, intestinal parasitism, and anemia due to blood loss.
- **Intestinal Parasitism** leading to poor nourishment, poor health, illness.
- **Skin Infections and Pigmentation** due to chronic urine scald of rear end and matting.
- **Dry eye**. Cannot produce enough tears due to high ammonia and particulate matter in air from waste, poor air quality. Causes blindness, painful eyes, rupture of eyeball.
- **Hernias**. Heart Murmurs. Ingrown toenails, **Ear Infections**. The uterus can be scarred to the intestines as a result of multiple pregnancies, making the spays very difficult.
- **Very undersocialized**. Fearful, Timid, Rarely aggressive. Head press in cage, afraid to make eye contact. Afraid of things they have not experienced before...wind, grass, noise, motion. But again, they do adapt to new lifestyles I call their retirement years.

\*Highlighted items are extremely common afflictions in these dogs regardless of age and are likely a result of poor environmental conditions.



# Meet Cookie

Client purchased Cookie from an Iowa breeder.

At FIVE MONTHS of age Cookie presented with an “odd” gait or stride, could not jump or bear much weight on hind legs, she was painful when getting up or laying down

- X-Rays revealed SEVERE Hip Dysplasia.
- Testing is considered an unnecessary expense by poor quality breeders.
- Owners could not afford treatment.
- Surrendered to RAGOM
- Cookie was treated surgically and adopted.



# Cookie

(RAGOM 06-169)





# Meet Lucky

- From IA USDA Class A Breeder
- Her hair was so matted she was sedated upon admission to shave her down.
- The matts made her ear flaps stick straight out from her head and occluded the ear canals.
- The matts on her chest had bound her legs together making it uncomfortable, if not painful to walk and rest.
- The matts covered her face so she could barely see what was in front of her.
- She suffered from severe flea infestation, ear and eye infections, skin infections due to matting and fleas, and severe dental disease.





# Lucky

Before



After





# Severe Matting

Meet Jimmy Joe. 6 year old Cocker Spaniel from IA USDA Class A breeder.

Before



After





# Severe Matting

**Carlton Before**

**From IA Class A USDA Breeder**



**Carlton with his new family**





# Severe Dental Disease

Dental disease is likely a result of

- Poor diet
- Poor air quality
- Dirty coat

We often find:

- Very painful mouth
- Hair embedded under the gums and tartar. Dogs chew at coat due to fleas and irritation from matts. Hair leads to more inflammation and to infection of the gums.
- Many teeth are missing. Others are so loose that once we remove the tartar, the tooth falls out of the socket.
- Some dogs get infections in the jawbone causing it to fracture.

Breeding stock at 2 years old will have the teeth of an 8 year old pet.

8 year old breeding stock old rarely has many teeth.

I have had to do dentals on dogs that were not even a year old to remove excess tartar buildup.

**Severe Dental Disease is a routine and expected finding!**





## Meet Sunshine

Pomeranian  
Severe Dental disease  
She had only a few teeth left.

They were so badly infected, she had no teeth left after the dental. These infections are painful and can be life threatening.

The tongue hangs to the side of the mouth without teeth to hold it in, and the tongue dries out and cracks.

This makes prehension of food and water difficult. There are no incisors to grab, no molars to grind, and your tongue is not where you want it to be. Teeth function to guide the tongue's movement.



## Meet Shasha

Another victim of  
toothlessness...





# Meet Oreo

- From IA USDA Breeder
- Cocker spaniel 8 years old
- Mild Umbilical hernia
- Severely matted, flea infestation
- **Huge inguinal hernia filled with intestines.**
- The hole in the abdominal wall is only about size of a half dollar.
- **THIS IS LIFE THREATENING!**
- There is a huge risk that the intestines filling this hernia could be pinched off, lose circulation, and die.
- The dog would then go septic as bacteria from intestine leak into the bloodstream and abdominal cavity and she would die a painful death.
- THE WEIGHT OF A UTERUS FULL OF PUPPIES DURING PREGNANCY WOULD MULTIPLY THE RISK OF THIS HAPPENING.
- I am amazed this dog survived 8 years of breeding!





# Melodie

## Before

She also has a small umbilical hernia and chronic urine scald.



## After



## Meet Isabel

From IA USDA Class A breeder  
Severe Flea infestation/Matting.

This was difficult to capture on film as fleas are so small.

When you look at this cat, her face appears to be moving because there are so many fleas.

She was at risk for

- anemia which can be life threatening,
- intestinal parasites that can be transmitted by fleas,
- skin infections.

All this while being pregnant or nursing kittens.

She was so matted she could not scratch the itch created by the flea's movement and the flea bites.





# Isabel's Bi-Annual Photo Cards



## Skin Infections/Pigmentation

- Infection and inflammation from chronic urine scald.
- Likely due to inadequate cage conditions and/or matts around the area that retain the urine like a sponge and hold it against the body.
- Pigmentation indicates that this is a chronic condition.
- Skin infections also occur beneath matts due to lack of air flow and hair pulling.





# Dry Eye (Keratoconjunctivitis Sicca)

- The glands of the eye lose their ability to produce tears.
- Can be associated with age, genetics, **environmental conditions.**
- The lack of tear production leads to
  - corneal scarring and vision loss
  - Painful corneal ulceration
  - rupture of the eye

High ammonia levels in the environment due to animal waste, and poor air quality and high particulate matter in the air may contribute to this condition.

## Meet Casey

Pomeranian  
8 year old breeder.

Congenital /Early Onset  
Cataract in Right Eye

A cataract is the loss of  
transparency of the lens of  
the eye.

The result is a loss of vision  
and increased risk of  
glaucoma.

It can be passed on to  
puppies.





# Environmental Conditions

Iowa USDA Class A Licensed Dog Breeder



# Same Place





# Same Place



# For and Against

## A conversation with a Commercial Breeder

### Her Side (Against Bill)

- I don't want just anybody walking through my kennel.
- Bill needs money to pay for an additional inspector to be hired and trained.
- Anyone can make a complaint, unfounded or not...why should I have to suffer another inspection as a result of a lie?
- It does not address unlicensed breeders.
- Next thing you know they will be after the cattle and swine industry.

### My Side (For the Bill)

- This bill only allows another trained inspector to enter the premises and **only** after a complaint has been made.
- If you expect so many complaints that you need another inspector, is that not indicative that there is a problem?
- If an unfounded complaint is made, then your inspection will reveal that. Frame the inspection report and hang it up to show you are above standard!
- That is not the function of this bill. But I do believe this is an issue as well.
- Dogs and cats are not livestock, they are domesticated PETS. Livestock is not addressed in this bill.
- This bill will only affect those breeders that are sub-par. If you are a quality breeder and your kennels are in good shape, you have nothing to worry about.



# Thank you for listening...

## Questions?



“Never, never be afraid to do what's right, especially if the well-being of a person or animal is at stake. Society's punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.